six thousand spectators, of all colours, amongst whom several officers of the garrison and myself had mingled to witness the day's sport. For this purpose we rode out to the ball-play ground in the afternoon previous to the day of the play, in order to witness this important preliminary ceremony, and took up our position in the midst of their numerous encampment. There were two points of timber about half a mile apart, in which the two parties for the play, with their respective families and friends, were encamped, and lying between them was the beautiful and level prairie on which the game was to be played.

My companions and myself, although we had been apprized that to see the whole of a ball-play we must remain on the ground all the night previous, had brought nothing to sleep upon, resolving to keep our eyes open and see what transpired through the night. During the afternoon we loitered about amongst the different tents and wigwams of the two encampments; and afterwards, at sundown, witnessed the ceremony of measuring off the ground and erecting the byes or goals which were to guide the play. Each party had its goal made with two upright posts about twenty-five feet high, and six feet apart, set firm in the ground, with a pole across at the top. These goals were about forty or fifty rods apart; and at a point just half-way between was another small stake driven down where the ball was to be started by throwing it straight up at the firing of a gun, for the contention of the players. All this preparation was made by some old men who were, it seems, selected to be the judges of the play; who drew a line also from one bye to the other—to which line came directly from the woods, on both sides, a great concourse of women and old men, boys and girls, and dogs and horses—where bets were to be made on the play. The betting was all done across this line, and was chiefly left to the women, who seemed to have marshalled out a little of everything that their wigwams and fields contained. Of these goods and chattels were knives, dresses, blankets, pots and kettles, drums, guns, bows and quivers, kegs of whiskey, war-clubs, tomahawks, shields and spears, horses, dogs, and saddles, and yet a catalogue of lesser Indian "valuables;" and all were placed in the possession of stakeholders who sat by them on the ground, and watched them during the night preparatory to the play.

The ground having been thus prepared, and the preliminaries of the game all settled, the bettings made, and the goods all "staked," night came on without the appearance of any players on the ground; but soon after dark a procession of lighted flambeaux was seen emerging from each encampment, escorting the players to the ground, where they were in a few moments assembled around their respective byes, in their ball-play dress. When, at the beat of their drums, and chaunts of the women, the two parties simultaneously commenced upon the 'Ball-play Dance,' as seen in the illustration.

For this dance the entire number of players on each side, in full dress and ornaments for the play, with their waving tails of white horse-hair attached to their girdles, and their ball-sticks in their hands, assembled and danced for a quarter of an hour in several concentric circles around their respective byes, their faces all looking to the centre, and both hands raised as high as they could reach them, brandishing and rattling their ball-sticks together, whilst they all united their voices in the most deafening chorus as the encircling mass moved rapidly around its centre. At the same time the women of each party, who had put their goods at stake, formed into two rows on the line between the two parties of players; and facing each other, danced with an uniform step, and in exact time to the music, uniting their voices to the Great Spirit—soliciting his favour in deciding the game to their respective advantage; and also encouraging the players to exert every power they possessed, in the struggle that was to ensue, for the protection of their property. In the mean time four old Medicine Men (who were to have the starting of the ball on the next morning, and who were to be the judges of the play, two of them with their bodies painted red and the other two white, and were seated at the half-way point where the ball was to be started) faithfully and respectively claimed, for their own sides, the favour of the Great Spirit; and his assistance in enabling them to judge rightly between the contending parties: all of which they were humbly imploring for in fumes which they were passing through the sacred stem of the calumet, during the whole night, whilst they sat or reclined around a little fire which they kept burning precisely upon the dividing line or point between the two byes, and from which the ball was to be raised to commence the struggle.

This dance, as the reader can easily imagine, was one not only grotesque and wild in its appearance, but of exceedingly picturesque and pleasing effect; and not only repeated at intervals of every half hour during the whole night, but continued in the morning until about nine o'clock, at which time the players consider themselves (after a sleepless night and one of extreme excitement and fatigue, with stomachs empty under the strictest denial of sustenance of any sort,) prepared to enter upon this exciting game, which generally exercises the highest keys of their lungs, and the almost constant and desperate exertion of all their limbs, through the greater part or whole of the day.

Plate Nº 23.

AN INDIAN BALL-PLAY.

Having in the two former illustrations and their chapters, explained to the readers the costume and preliminaries of the Ball-play, I here introduce them to the ball-play ground, where five or six hundred youths, with chastened and oiled limbs, and with empty stomachs, as I have described, are met upon the ground and actually engaged in the play. And here I *must* falter; and *faltering*, must apologise for the weakness of my pencil in endeavouring to pourtray a scene like this. And yet in a little kindness to my own pencil, I would venture the opinion that scenes like these, with hundreds, and sometimes with thousands, of these proud and emulous youths, with their graceful and denuded limbs, darting and almost flying over the enamelled prairies, are entirely beyond the reach of art, and the players, in their beautiful gambols and varied leaps for the ball, afford models for the painter or sculptor, equal to those that inspired the hand and soul of the artist, in the Olympian Games or the Roman Forum.